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BIDEN CALLS XI JINPING A DICTATOR AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL US-CHINA TALKS

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his China visit on Tuesday without making any substantial progress on easing tensions

WAR OF WORDS BETWEEN US PREZ, BEIJING

Addressing a fundraiser in California ahead of next year's presidential election, US President Joe Biden on Wednesday said, "That's a great embarrassment for dictators," referring to a suspected Chinese spy balloon that was shot down by the US Air Force in February. China hit back promptly, calling Biden's remark "irresponsible" and a "blatant political provocation"

RELATIONSHIP DIPS TO HISTORIC LOW

- The US-China relationship has hit a historical low over various issues including Washington's support for the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan and claims that Beijing has stolen American intellectual property
- During the talks, China flatly rejected the US's core demand of restoring military-level contacts, snapped by Beijing over US support for Taiwan | P12

$690.6 bn

WAS THE SIZE OF US-CHINA TRADE IN 2022, THE HIGHEST BETWEEN ANY TWO COUNTRIES

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PM leads historic Yoga session at UN, describes it as 'free from copyrights'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with other dignitaries, arrives to participate in 9th International Day of Yoga celebrations at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday | PTI

Modi hardsells India's soft power at UN event

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday pitched for making yoga a part of everyone's life as he led a historic event at the UN headquarters in New York to commemorate the 9th International Day of Yoga, attended by top UN officials, diplomats and prominent personalities.

The event witnessed participation of yoga enthusiasts representing 135 nations, setting a new Guinness World Record for the highest number of nationalities partaking in a yoga session at the iconic North Lawn of the UN headquarters.

The attendees included diplomats, officials, academics, healthcare professionals, technocrats, industry leaders such as Csaba Korosi, President of the 77th United Nations General Assembly, Eric Adams, Mayor of New York City, Amina J Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, Hollywood actor Richard Gere, and Michelin Star chef Vikas Khanna.

"Let us embrace yoga as a part of our well-being and make it an integral part of our lives," Modi said. Citing UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres's message, he said: "Yoga brings us closer together and enhances the health of the planet".

It was Modi who engineered the creation in 2014 of the International Day of Yoga every June 21 through a UN General Assembly resolution.

"Yoga originates from India and, like all ancient Indian traditions, it is alive, dynamic, and universally applicable. Yoga is a way of life," said Modi, adding: "Yoga is free from copyrights, patents and royalty payments."

This year's theme for the International Yoga Day was 'Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which roughly translates to 'one earth, one family, one Future'.

The PM, who is visiting the US at the invitation of President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, will join them for the state banquet along with a number of dignitaries on Thursday. He is also set to address a joint session of the US Congress.

TWITTER WILL FOLLOW LOCAL RULES: MUSK

Prior to the yoga day event, Modi met several prominent figures, including industry leaders such as Tesla CEO Elon Musk. During the meeting, the PM invited Musk to explore investment opportunities in India, especially in the fields of electric mobility and commercial space. Musk responded that India has more promise than any other large country and that he is incredibly excited about its future. Talking to reporters after meeing Modi, Musk said Twitter, the company he owns, does not have a choice but to follow local laws, adding: "We will do our best to provide the freest speech that is possible under the law"

We have to eliminate our contradictions, blockages and resistances through yoga. We have to present the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' as an example to the world

PM Narendra Modi

GUARANTEE IN QUESTION

ANNA BHAGYA TO BE DELAYED

State eyes rice from Central agencies at FCI rate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Anna Bhagya scheme that promises 10 kg of free rice per head to those belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) card-holders, is likely to face delays.

The scheme was planned to be rolled out on July 1. The reason for the delay is the Centre's alleged turnaround and the struggle by the Congress government to procure rice at more or less the same rate of Food Corporation of India (FCI) at Rs 34 per kg. The Siddaramaiah government also has second thoughts on procuring foodgrains from states such as Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and West Bengal (all non-BJP ruled states) for two reasons: They would not be able to meet Karnataka's requirement of 2,28,000 metric tonnes, and the higher procurement price.

Addressing the media after meeting President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on Wednesday, CM Siddaramaiah said, "It will cost Rs 42/kg in Andhra; Telangana stated only paddy is available; Chhattisgarh CM told me they are in a position to supply 1 lakh metric tonne of rice only for one month; and Punjab CM stated that he will discuss with officials and get back."

Siddaramaiah said if the government went to the open market, it would take two months to procure rice. Instead, quotations have been invited from central agencies such as National Co-operative Consumers Federation (NCCF), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) and Kendriya Bhandar.

These agencies will call for tenders, take a call on the price and let the Karnataka government know soon. But the price is expected to be a little higher than FCI's Rs 34 per kg.

Siddaramaiah reiterated that all this had come to pass as "the Union Government played politics".

CASH CRUNCH: EGGS ONCE A WEEK IN MID-DAY MEAL

Due to a lack of funds and the rising cost of eggs, the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL) has announced that egg distribution as part of the midday meal scheme will be temporarily limited to once a week. According to a circular, the decision to reduce the number of eggs distributed will be revised after the presentation of the state budget on July 7.

Quick darshan for elderly in state temples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state government has made arrangements for senior citizens aged 65 and above to have a quick darshan of deities at all its major temples without waiting in queues. The Department of Endowments has issued a circular in this regard.

Presently, some temples have special paid darshan for senior citizens. Such a facility will be made free for senior citizens.

According to the circular, a large number of devotees visit state-owned temples (Grade A and Grade B) daily. Senior citizens are forced to wait in queues for long hours for darshan. To avoid this inconvenience, senior citizens will be taken for darshan directly without waiting in queues.

This decision comes in the wake of appeals for easy darshan of deities in temples for senior citizens.

Senior citizens can avail this facility by showing their Aadhar cards (for age proof), the circular stated.

The department has directed all deputy commissioners and tahsildars to set up help desks in major temples for senior citizens.

EXPRESS READ

New KMF chief hints at hike in milk price

BENGALURU: Newly-elected Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) chairman Bheema Naik on Wednesday hinted at hiking both the selling price of milk and its procurement. Accordingly, he is scheduled to lead a delegation of presidents of all 14 milk producers' unions of the state to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah | P4

ED RAIDS AT PROPERTIES LINKED TO UDDHAV, ADITYA

The ED raided 15 locations in Mumbai in connection with a money laundering case related to an alleged Covid centres scam | P10

No more bus passes, girl students to get Shakti cards

AKHILESH KARTHIK @ Bengaluru

SCHOOL and college-going girls, who used to produce their admission tickets to get yearly bus passes, need not buy passes henceforth.

They can travel by state-run buses for free under Shakti scheme. An official order in this regard is expected soon, according to sources. Like other women passengers, girl students should get Shakti smart cards. Applications for such cards will be received soon, the sources said.

They said conductors of state-run buses have been directed to issue "zero" tickets to girl students. If they have purchased passes for 2023-24, they will be allowed to travel on those routes and conductors have been directed not to issue "zero" tickets to them.

The sources said there is no provision for refund of bus pass fee paid by girl students. School and college-going boys will now be allowed to travel by state-run buses by producing passes issued for the last academic year (2022-23) till June 30. They should get new passes through the Seva Sindhu portal from July 1. On June 20, 17.89 lakh women travelled by BMTC buses and the total ticket amount exempted under the Shakti scheme was Rs 2.27 crore. KSRTC recorded 17.46 lakh passengers and the exemption was Rs 5.21 crore. NWKRTC recorded 14.47 lakh passengers and the exemption was Rs 3.59 crore. KKRTC registered 8.05 lakh passengers and the total exemption was Rs 2.57 crore.

OBITUARY

Sylvie's rich heritage of irreverence & butter

GURBIR SINGH

AFTER a long innings of effective advertising copy and sales campaigns, Sylvester daCunha passed away on Tuesday night. He leaves behind wife Nisha daCunha and son Rahul, a creative ad guru in his own right. He also leaves behind the legacy of the 'Utterly-Butterly' Amul Girl who refuses to age and continues to enthrall and poke fun from hoardings and digital media.

Sylvie, as he was known to his friends, started off with Advertising and Sales Promotion in the 1960s, and later founded daCunha Communications. But he will always be remembered for creating the Amul Girl in 1966, an campaign that the Guinness record for the longest running ad campaign that continues to run even today.

His break first came when 'Operation Flood' man Verghese Kurien was looking to counter the more entrenched Polson Butter. Soon after bagging the Amul account, Sylvie realised he had to do something to take the brand beyond the boring tagline it had then — 'Purely, The Best'.

Sylvester and his team of Eustace Fernandes, Usha Katrak and Marie Pinto came up with the loveable Moppet — the little girl with a red polka dress; and Nisha daCunha coined 'Utterly Butterly' tagline. It was an instant hit, and housewives' hearts melted like butter.

Contrary to traditional advertising copy, Amul ads were designed to be not only fun and entertaining, but also irreverent. The very first ad that won rave reviews was of the Amul girl, kneeling in prayer, but with a naughty eye cocked on a slab of butter with the slogan: "Give us this day our daily bread with Amul Butter".

The Amul campaign was among the first to give news context to its sharp and witty one-liners. Nothing was out-of-bounds. Sylvester's copy writers had a free hand. For instance, British Airways was not amused when the Amul girl called it 'British Errways' when the airline lost cricketer Sachin Tendulkar's luggage.

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